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SUBJECT: GUIDANCE: CONSULTATIONS ON THE SPECIAL TRIBUNAL
FOR LEBANON, MARCH 27

¶1. (U) USUN may draw from the points in para 2 below during UNSC consultations on the Special Tribunal for Lebanon currently scheduled for March 27.

¶2. (U) Begin points.

-- I would first like to thank Under Secretary General Michel for his informative briefing and for all the efforts he and his staff have undertaken to implement resolution 1757. The UN has made tremendous progress in setting up the Special Tribunal for Lebanon since resolution 1757 was adopted in May 2007, and this has in large part been due to Mr. Michel's tireless commitment, which we salute.

Why this issue is important

-- It is timely and appropriate that we discuss the Tribunal now, just two months after the latest political assassination in Lebanon, which killed Internal Security Forces Captain Wissam Eid. This attack, of course, was just the latest in a campaign of assassinations targeting pro-independence and democracy forces in Lebanon. I also cannot ignore the attack on January 15, which struck a U.S. Embassy vehicle, injuring two Lebanese employees of the embassy and three Lebanese passers-by.

-- These heinous attacks will only stop when those responsible realize that they will be held to account, which is what makes operationalizing the Special Tribunal quickly so important. As the Secretary General has said, the Tribunal is now a reality, and the process of bringing to justice those responsible for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and others, is irreversible.

-- In any discussion of Lebanon, it is impossible to ignore the continuing political crisis. Although the Lebanese seem to have reached consensus on a presidential candidate, we are deeply troubled by the fact that a minority, backed by Syria and Iran, are using extra-constitutional preconditions to continue to block the elections. This must stop. As the Arab League summit begins in Damascus, we call yet again on the Lebanese Parliamentary Speaker to open Parliament and allow Lebanon's democratically-elected MPs to fulfill their responsibility to elect a President in accordance with their constitution and without delay or preconditions.

Four points on the Tribunal

-- I wish to make four specific points about the Tribunal and the Secretary General's report on the implementation of resolution 1757.

-- First, we commend the considerable progress the UN has achieved in setting up the Tribunal, including the signing of

a Headquarters Agreement, the appointment of a prosecutor and a registrar, the selection of judges, the establishment of a Management Committee, and the receipt of significant contributions and pledges.

-- Second, we urge the UN to continue making progress in operationalizing the court and to demonstrate further that the process of securing justice for Lebanon is irreversible.

-- Third, we congratulate all of the Member States who have already made donations to the Tribunal. We also encourage donor countries to continue to support the Tribunal financially. The United States has so far pledged \$14 million toward the setup and the first year of the Tribunal's operation, and we expect to remain a significant contributor over the lifetime of the Tribunal. We encourage other donors to continue to do their part as well and, in this regard, to advise the Secretary General that they intend to contribute to the Tribunal throughout its lifetime.

-- Fourth, we call on all parties to support the integrity of the Tribunal. The Tribunal must pursue justice wherever its investigation leads, and member states should not attempt to prejudice that effort by suggesting political arrangements meant to protect certain parties from prosecution. The United States fully supports the Tribunal and the efforts it will undertake, and expects all states to do the same.

Conclusion

-- In conclusion, we note that the Special Tribunal is a crucial element in the effort to end impunity for political assassinations in Lebanon and beyond. For months now, several dozen members of the Lebanese parliament have been confined to a hotel in downtown Beirut, seeking refuge from the very real threat of assassination that they face every day. How ironic that the perpetrators of these crimes continue to live their lives in freedom while their potential victims have effectively become prisoners in their own country. These brave individuals are counting on this Tribunal to take action as quickly as possible so that those responsible are identified, taken into custody, and brought to justice. We welcome this opportunity for an update on the Secretariat's efforts to set up the Tribunal and look forward

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to receiving a similar update from UNIIIC Commissioner Daniel Bellemare on the status of his investigation in April.

End points.

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